Welcoming the New Author

WHAT, in the life of the publisher and the magazine editor, is the great adventure? It is the discovery of the new author; and naturally the idea is often the suggestion of pleasant though futile day dreams. Suppose, for example, that it is the year 1889 or thereabouts, and that you are an American magazine editor, for the moment in a state of keen depression over the lack of originality and "punch" in the material at hand, and hoping that something worth while will turn up. Then the office boy brings in a card with a striking, unfamiliar name upon it, and there appears at the other side of the desk a young man of medium height, British cut of clothing, and from behind thick round spectacles a pair of the keenest gray eyes in the world twinkle at you. He states his errand. He has a few stories, dealing with life in his native India, that he would like to submit. "Here is one that I call 'The Man Who Would Be King,' and this one is 'The Drums of the Fore and Aft,' and here are three poems that might fit—'The Ballad of Fisher's Boarding House' and 'The True Romance,' and 'Danny Deever.'"

Of course, in imagination you picture yourself reading a few lines, at first perfunctorily, and then with gasping interest, and then, before the visit is over, going to the point of roping the young stranger and relentlessly applying the thumb screw if gentler methods of persuasion prove inadequate in inducing him to sign a life contract for his work. As a matter of fact, you would probably have told him that no one had the slightest interest in stories about India, that his titles were preposterous, and that the work submitted, though not without merit, was hardly of the high quality to which readers of your magazine had been accustomed. There were several American editors and publishers who in after years recalled bitterly just that experience.

In extending welcome to these authors of "first books" it behooves us not to forget for a moment that there was a day when every man and woman now numbered among the great in literature—Balzac, Thackeray, Dickens, George Eliot, George Sand, Hawthorne, Irving, the mere list of names might run to any length—was, with high beating heart, launching his or her "first book." Very often that first book was far from being a masterpiece. Balzac, seventy years after his death, is conceded to be at the very apex of all fiction. Yet for ten years of his young life, writing madly in his attic in the Rue Lesdiguieres, stimulated by cup after cup of the black coffee that ruined his health, he produced only novels that were bad imitations of Walter Scott and Fenimore Cooper. Then the great idea of the "Human Comedy" dawned upon him. Nearer to us is the example of Robert Louis Stevenson, "playing the sedulous ape," as he expressed it, until the time when he found himself.

Jack Crawford, the author of "I Walked in Arden," was born in Washington, D. C. From the age of 6 he was brought up in London, "an American cockney," to use his own words. Since 1909 he has been a teacher in the Sheffield Scientific School of Yale. "In between," he says, "a wanderer—South America to the North Cape, Vienna to California; and now a peaceful life in New England." David Sentner's first book, a volume of verse, entitled "Cobblestones," won the Alfred A. Knopf publication prize offered at Columbia University. A war veteran who had lost an eye, David Sentner was sent to Columbia by the United States Veteran Bureau. He had served two years in the Twenty-seventh Division, and was wounded on the Hindenburg line and again in Flanders. He was born in New York city, and before the war was a reporter on a New York newspaper.

Lilian Bennet-Thompson and George Hubbard are coauthors of "Without Compromise." Mr. Hubbard was born in New Hampshire and has been an actor, playing mostly in Charles Frohman's companies with Maude Adams, William Gillette and other of Frohman's stars. He began writing one act plays and gradually drifted into fiction. Since 1910 he has written many short stories and serials in collaboration with Lilian Bennet-Thompson. He has a great love of outdoors. He and Mrs. Bennet-Thompson live at Greenwood Lake, New York. "We both like the country," says Mrs. Bennet-Thompson, "and prefer living in a place where outdoors is rather a state of being than of going." Lilian Bennet-Thompson is a born New Yorker. Her first position was with Charles Scribner's Sons, but for several years she wrote advertising copy for an agency, specializing in machinery, before taking up fiction professionally. For a number of years she has contributed fiction, articles and sketches to many publications, latterly in collaboration with Mr. Hubbard.

Katherine Gray's first novel is "A Little Leaven," published by the J. B. Lippincott Company. The background of the story is the mountainous country of the South, a land which she has known from birth. She was born in the mountains of Kentucky and lived there till she was almost 18 years old. Her parents were mountaineers, as were their parents. In the little mountain town of Katherine Gray's girlhood there were few books, and the only periodicals obtainable were *Yankee Blade, Saturday Night* and the New York *Ledger*. At the age of 14 she was sent to boarding school. Of that experience she writes: "My contact with the world away from my mountain village forced upon me the surprising fact that I, as a mountaineer, was somehow different. Just where the difference lay was never quite clear; certainly it was not in my own consciousness. I had often heard one or another of the mountaineers tell amusing stories of how they had done clownish things merely because they thought it funny to play up to the role outsiders had cast for them."

Thomas Beer, author of "The Fair Rewards," a first novel that treated rather daringly of definite personalities of the American stage, was born in the middle West, but was brought East at an early age. Some of his early impressions were of theatrical people, for in his youth he spent the summer months in Nantucket Island, which has long been known for its interesting actors' colony. After Yale came the war for Mr. Beer. Declined by the examiners for Plattsburg, he enlisted in the Field Artillery. Later he acted as interpreter, mess officer and mendicant for the staff in France, according to his own somewhat flippant description.

In early boyhood Richard Matthews Hallet, author of "The Canyon of the Fools," a first novel, published by Harper, decided to "knock about the world" as a tramp. He was born in a shipbuilding city, Bath, Me.; educated in the public schools, and finally at Harvard, where he studied law; served for a year as a "half-hearted lawyer" in the office of a Federal judge in New York city, and then went off as a sailor before the mast on a British bark bound for Sydney, Australia. He found that four months is a long time to stay on any one ship, and so at port he "jumped her" and set out into the Australian bush. There for several months he made his living by digging rabbits out of wheat fields. He also broke rock on the roads, and once he helped to shear a sheep. From Melbourne he shipped as a stoker on a mail steamer for Merrie England. When he returned to the United States he began to write. He would write himself down to his last ten dollar bill, and then he would fire an ore freighter on the Great Lakes or go timber cruising in Canada.

W. F. Alder's first book, "The Isle of Vanishing Men," tells of American explorers living with cannibals in the interior of New Guinea. Mr. Alder was born in Pennsylvania and was educated for an engineering career. But he took up technical work in connection with the "movies," building producing plants and designing cameras. Then he started to see the world. First he covered the North American continent. He has hunted big game in the Yukon, slept under the Northern Lights on the glaciers of the Arctic and under the stars of the painted desert of Arizona. From America he turned to the Far East, and there he has specialized in out of the way places. New Guinea is by no means the only place where those in authority refused responsibility for his safety.

Hawthorne Daniel, the author of a first novel, "In the Favour of the King," which Doubleday, Page & Co. have just published, is a young editor on the staff of *World's Work* who indulges his love of adventure by writing fiction. He is a Nebraskan and a wanderer by inclination. After entering the Naval Academy at Annapolis and spending three months as a midshipman he decided that engineering was a more attractive profession than sailing a battleship, so he went West again to Iowa State College. Farming looked alluring until he tried it in the Canadian Northwest and the Texas Panhandle, both in one year. "By that time," he says, "I reached the conclusion that I was a born writer and came east to Columbia University to secure the professional aid that even the born genius requires." In the meantime he was wandering to the West Indies on a collier, to the Grand Banks on a fisherman, about Cuba a bit with very little money in his pocket and back to New York as supercargo on a sugar steamship. Then came the war and he became an ensign in the Naval Reserve.

Beverly Nicholls, author of "Patchwork," from the press of Henry Holt & Co., was born September 9, 1898, at Long Ashton, near Bristol, England, and was educated at Marlborough College, Wiltshire. In 1917 he left college to join the army as a second lieutenant of infantry. Released from active service in September, 1918, he came to the United States as secretary to the British Universities Mission. Demobilized in January, 1919, he entered Oxford, choosing Balliol. At Oxford he was the editor of the *Isis*, and secretary, librarian and finally president of the Oxford Union. After leaving the university he read for the bar, at the same time writing on "Patchwork" and another novel.

Elliot H. Paul, whose first novel, "Indelible," is announced by the Houghton, Mifflin Company, was born February 13, 1891, at Malden, Mass. His early life was animated by the spirit of revolt against what he deemed the narrowing limitations of New England. After being graduated from the high school, where he apparently studied as little as possible, he went to Montana and there lived an adventurous, roving life,

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